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MARRIED LOVERS:

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A Petite Comedy,

IN TWO ACTS.;

AS PERFORMED AT

THE THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT GARDEN,

On February 2, 1831.

By T. POWER, Esq.

AUTHOR OF "THE LOST HEIR," &c.

BALTIMORE:
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Assorting deck.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

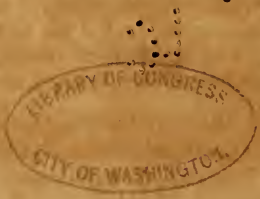
Duc d'Orleans, . .	Mr. Abbot.
Marquis de Meneville, .	Mr. Bartley.
Sir John Ascot, . .	Mr. Ward.
Colonel O'Dillon, . .	M. Power.
Pierre, ...	Mr. Irwin.
Francis, ...	Mr. Mars.

Servants, Courtiers, &c.

Duchess d'Orleans, .	Miss Ford.
Madame de Meneville, .	Miss Taylor.
Lady Ascot. . . .	Mrs. Chatterly.
Annette, ...	Miss Philips.

Ladies of Ballet, &c.

Time of Action—*One Day and Night.*
Place of Action—*Paris.*
Costume—*Louis Quinze.*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MARRIED LOVERS.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Madame* DE MENEVILLE'S *Bourdoir.*

Madame discovered arranging her hair in her toilette-glass.—Lady ASCOT *sitting opposite.*

Mad. Well, *ma belle Anglaise*, and what now is this mighty secret?

Lady. Dear Madame de Meneville, how shall I find words to break the force of the blow my principles compel me to inflict upon my friend!

Mad. A very terrible denouncement; but you perceive I am steeled for the discovery; so now do come at once to the *coup de theatre.*

Lady. After the hospitality I have received beneath your roof, judge how painful must be the effort, when I tell you, that this day I leave it.

"*Mad.* Leave this house; heavens, child, how have I——

"*Lady.* You have been all goodness, alas! 'tis I—I." That I have unconsciously been the cause of offence to you, of a nature nothing but my absence can atone.

Mad. My sweet cousin, what crime can you have been guilty of? Perhaps through envy, bribed Marietta to spoil my new *robe-de-bal* for to-night; or in a fit of spleen, given my parrot liberty, strangled my monkey, or poisoned my lap-dog;—what other horror?

Lady. My dear Madame, if I must be explicit, it is your husband, the Marquis that——

Mad. Oh, 'tis him you have poisoned! Is that all?

Lady. But, pardon me; you will not listen to what, nothing but the horror of a fatal quarrel has prevented my disclosing both to my husband and to you, some time back. In short the Marquis——

Mad. Has had the good taste to become desperately enamoured with his pretty guest; and, what's more, has had the courage to declare his passion—bless you, my love, that is no secret to me!

Lady. Madame, you surprise me, how could you have a suspicion of——

Mad. Oh, suspicion has long been out of the question; every one in the house knows it, except you and your good Lord and Master.

Lady. Every one knows it! I shall die with shame.

Mad. You need not—nobody minds it.

Lady. Oh! Madame de Meneville, keep it close hidden from Sir John, for he is so jealously fond of me, and so passionate, that were he but to suspect the Marquis's libertine designs, the consequences would be——

Mad. Too trifling to be entertaining, or one might be tempted to divulge.

Lady. You will pardon me, Madame, when I say your indifference surprises me; is it possible you have so long suspected all this, and yet refrained to assert your honour's claims.

Mad. Wherefore be so selfish, as to rob my dear Marquis of a little harmless amusement; I had too much reliance on your honour and good taste to suspect you of any thing *serious* with a man of a certain age; and even had I found you proceed to extremities, I had my revenge offered by a *friend* of yours.

Lady. Revenge!—by who?

Mad. By your very loving jealous husband, Sir John, who——

"*Lady.* Either I misunderstand, or you jest!"

"*Mad.* I assure thee, my little simplicity, there

"is no jesting intended on your poor husband's part, "for he" has made me the warmest protestations for these three weeks past!

Lady. The wretch!—is it possible! after all his pretended love and jealousy?—Oh, how I shall hate him! an *ugly*, ill-tempered, horrid old monster!

Mad. Come, come, my dear, you must allow he has a fair excuse for his falsehood; and forgive him, in compliment to his good taste—ha, ha, ha!

Lady. I'll seek out—I'll upbraid him with his falsehood. I'll write to England, and expose him to our friends—I'll be separated—I'll quit his protection—I'll leave this house—I'll break my heart *(throws herself into a chair and weeps)*—Oh, I shall die with grief and vexation!

Mad. At what ought to afford you amusement, and provoke you to laughter. Oh! silly, silly, lady.

Lady. Ah! dear Madame, you do not know half the sacrifices I've made for this old rogue, or half the pains he took to persuade me that he doated on me; and am I so duped at last! Why, his hypocrisy had half persuaded me to be fond of the wretch. Hav'n't I told him of every approach to gallantry that has been made me, and by whom?—hav'n't I been denied to the Duc d'Orleans in his absence, because he chose to be jealous of his Grace's frequent calls here? but I'll be *revenged*—I'll go to England.

Mad. You need not go so far, you can be very readily revenged where you are.

Lady. How mean you?

Mad. Why see the gay Duke when next he calls; and, perhaps, between us, some mode may be suggested——

Lady. Pardon me, Madame, I know too well what is due to my own honour, to fly to such an evil retaliation.

Mad. And what evil retaliation have I proposed, *ma belle*,—*o' fi donc!* to suspect me; but you Eng-

lish are ever *en-garde;* your virtue is always surrounded by a *cheval-de frise*, and there's no approaching you without first giving the countersign.

Lady. Excuse me if I have misunderstood you, but I fancied you proposed to——

Mad. To anticipate *mon mari* in his disloyalty! No, no, I have no present *liason* that tempts to such a dangerous extremity; besides, I owe the Marquis too much gratitude for that; did he not bestow upon me a splendid fortune, perfect freedom, his own good-humours, aye, and an agreeable person too, although, perhaps, a little *passe?* and shall I throw away all these, and an excellent heart into the bargain, merely because the good man has found room enough there to squeeze your pretty image into? Oh, no! we'll have better revenge—but, hush! they come—dry your pretty eyes, compose your ruffled looks, meet the rogue's smiles with smiles as false, see the Duke the next time alone, leave the rest to *me;* and I promise you revenge, as innocent as an English wife, and as ample as a Frenchwoman can desire. They come, the gay deluders, only look on them, ha! ha! ha!

Enter SIR JOHN, *following the* MARQUIS.

(Both middle-aged men, their appearance contrasted.)

Mar. Madame la Marquise, bon jour, beautiful as an angel this morning. *(Kisses his wife's hand gallantly, and passes to Lady Ascot.)* Oh! my Lady Ascot has had gentle dreams last night—she smiles so benignly upon her poor Cavalier, (*aside*).

Sir John. (*eyeing his wife askance.*) What looks of coldness—she is unworthy my tenderness. But, had my happy lot fallen here, divine Madame de Meneville, (*aside*)—I am too happy to see you well and in spirits this morning, (*ogling her side.*) Ah!—

Mad. Ah, yes! in our gaity lies the only chance

we poor brunettes have for conquest, when opposed to the *blonde* beauty of your fair countrywomen, Sir John.

Sir John. 'Tis true, My dear Madam, that gaity and wit form a portion of your armoury; but——

Marq. But even they are little more than a forlorn hope against such charms—with manner less gay certainly (*aside to Lady Ascot.*) but far more interesting.

Mad. Ah, you men, you men! ever flattering to deceive. But, my Lady, you wished to show me your dress for to-night; so we'll leave these gallant lords of ours to the delight of expatiating on their wives' innumerable amiabilities, wit, and beauty in our absence. Adieu!

Sir John. Allow me, Madam, to attend you.

[*Takes her hand, and leads her to the door, ogling*]

Marq. Permit me, my Lady, to——

[*Takes Lady Ascot's hand, and follows, looking languishingly. At the door, kisses her hand; not seeing that Sir John is doing exactly the same to Madame de Meneville.*

Sir John. (*as the ladies exit.*) Fascinating Madame de Menville! [*Aside.*

Marq. Divine Lady Ascot! [*Aside.*

Sir John. My dear Marquis, you are a happy man to possess a wife, who combines in her person all that is lovely—in her wit all that is brilliant!

Marq. You are right, Sir John. I consider myself a happy man in having secured such a treasure; but you have equal claims on the congratulations of your friends, for my Lady Ascot is exquisitely interesting. In short, I think, we are two very lucky *middle*-aged gentlemen.

Sir John. Hem! my dear Marquis—my wife's interesting manner is what I complain of, it wants life, it wants that *jouissance*, which wit and good hu-

mour impart—besides, 'tis not natural to her.—When single she was gay, and light as summer breeze—but *since* the knot was tied—Ugh!

Marq. I don't wonder, with such a melancholy mate, poor thing, I pity her. [*Aside.*

Sir John. What do you say, Marquis?

Marq. I say I pity you, Sir John.

Sir John. This cursed embassy, why was I tempted to join it, and bring a young wife to this Paris, this, the very hot-bed of intrigue, the grave of husbands' honour.

Marq. Well, my good friend, if your honour be buried *here*, you will at least have the satisfaction of knowing it lies interred in the very best company; but come, come, your wife has lost her spirits, and you grieve to see her dull.

Sir John. I do, right! for, my dear friend, let me whisper in your ear, that I suspect her dullness to be assumed—'tis all allurement, or what's still worse, a growing sign of passion for another.

Marq. Ah! I rejoice—that is, I regret to hear this—(*aside*) should he be right! Have you any suspicion of the lucky—that is the libertine, who?

Sir John. More than suspicion—*confirmation!*

Marq. (*aside*) The devil.

Sir John. Ah! my dear friend, you have cause if you knew all.

Marq. You are agitated, confide in my friendship, what is it ruffles you thus?

Sir John. I shall astound you by naming him.

Marq. The gipsy must have told him. [*Aside.*

Sir John. You are already surprised; what will you say, when I assure you, I have the man this moment in my eye?

Marq. Surely, Sir John, you don't insinuate?

Sir John. I don't—I don't insinuate—I affirm, that the Duke *d'Orleans* is the lover—the avow'd lover of my wife,

Marq. Oh! I breathe again. (*aside.*)—You do, in

deed, surprise me; what has led you to this conclusion?

Sir John. Why, partly my wife's own hints, confirmed by this letter, which I managed to intercept. Read, my dear friend, read. [*Gives letter.*

Marq. (*reads.*)—"Lovely Lady Ascot, to what am I to attribute your reserve?—to a dislike of my manners and person, or to the constant presence of the De Menevilles? It cannot arise from devotion to your husband, for what natural sympathy can there be between Venus and Vulcan?" Venus and Vulcan!—why, who does he mean by—

Sir John. O, can't you guess?—hem?—don't laugh *yet*, but read on.

Marq. (*reads.*) "Yours must have been a marriage of convenience, and as such should be fairly treated."

Sir John. Charming doctrine for a young wife! go on.

Marq. (*reads.*) "I leave it to your own ingenuity, if you wish to oblige me, to find some excuse for quitting the house of the coxcombical old beau, De Meneville."

Sir John. Hem! you know whom he means by that?

Marq. Ha, ha! bravo, my Lord Duke! (*reads.*) "and repairing to some hotel of your own, where, without restraint, I may declare, at the feet of the loveliest of her sex, how much she is the adored of

———ORLEANS."

Sir John. Now my good Marquis, you will allow I have some cause for suspicion!

Marq. Of the Duke, assuredly! but I see nothing against your lady.

Sir John. Do you not see her assumed demureness of aspect, her interesting langour of deportment; above all, she has this very morning been importuning me to leave this house.

Marq. Indeed! but did she give you no reason?

Sir John. No; what reason could she give, only hints that her apartments were less her own than she chose they should be. So that I saw in a moment, though I had intercepted this letter, her lover had found some other means to let her know his wishes.

Marq. Did you give her any hint of your suspicions?

Sir John. Nothing more than a general caution. I thought it best, first of all, to confide my troubles to your friendship, and take your advice upon the subject.

Marq. I assure you, the recital has interested me nearly!

Sir John. Ah, my dear Marquis, I was assured you would feel anxious to preserve your old friend's honour from the Duke.

Marq. From the Duke! most certainly. My advice is simple:—by no means leave my hotel: your apartments are as much your own here as they could be any where, and you may forbid the Duke's coming into them, though I cannot deny him my house, situated as I am at Court, and on the terms he is with my wife.

Sir John. My dear Marquis, pardon me; but how can you talk, without jealousy, of such a libertine as the Duke being on intimate terms with your wife?

Marq. Jealousy, my good friend?—what is he like? I never knew the gentleman; and depend on it, if ever he takes up his residence in Paris, he'll be cut by every well-bred man, as belonging to the canaille, and inadmissable into good society.

"*Sir John.* A happy man to have such perfect "confidence in the honour of your wife.

"*Marq.* You are right," I have the most perfect confidence in Madame de Meneville's honour. I do not think her capable of wronging me. At all events I know she possesses too much wit and discretion to let it be suspected for a moment.

Sir John. Insensible fop! he is unworthy such a treasure, (*aside.*)

Marq. Horrid savage! 'twould be a sin to spare him, (*aside.*)

Sir John. But come, accompany me to the Ambassador. Meantime I will give orders, which in the event of the Duke's calling, will exclude him from my apartment.—I'll match them yet, with all their plotting against my honour.

Marq. Ah, dear friend, I fear your caution will avail you little. I am a determined predestinarian in these cases, and conclude, that when once a wife has decided upon her husband's fate, 'tis not in human ingenuity to reverse the decree.

"*Sir John.* But at least one ought to defer the "mischief as long as possible; and come what may, I "shall have the satisfaction of knowing that I did "not act unadvisedly, but confided my sorrows in the "bosom of friendship.

"*Marq.* On the wisdom of that step there can be but one opinion."

[*Exeunt Marquis and Sir John.*

SCENE II.—*A Hall—On one side a practicable window.*

Enter Duchess in domino, and mask in her hand, Lady ASCOT, *and Madame* DE MENEVILLE.

Mad. Ha, ha, dear Madame, are not these scruples of my pretty cousin amusing?—surely with the permission of her Grace, there can be no great harm in your holding an innocent *tête-à-tête* with the Duke —you're not afraid, eh, coz?

Lady. Of appearances only, which are as fatal to the honour of a married woman, as actual shame, and, therefore, almost as criminal.

Duch. Why in England, that argument might hold good, but you are here, in a land where happi-

ly a greater latitude is allowed the sex; where every pretty butterfly is suffered to flutter as near the lamp as possible, unblamed, as long as its wings are actually kept unsinged.

Lady. I fear, to those who risk an approach, that must prove a difficult task.

Mad. Aye, to you sober English, who must always be so much in earnest with every thing; you've no idea of *l'amour pour badiner*—no notion of joking with a man; but come, come, now you must allow the Duke to see you *tête-à-tête*, and, should he press for a private interview, just contrive to give him encouragement enough to lead him into the trap I have prepared for all these amorous sparks of ours.

Lady. If you will insist; but I fear I shall act my part very badly.

Duch. I'll warrant you! only let the man be once fairly on his knees, before the very simplest of us, and I'll trust the rest to old madame Nature. Adieu! I will don my mask, and retire as I came, by the garden, where my chair waits. Adieu! as the plot thickens, let me hear from you, and rely on my aid, to prove that simple woman's wit would make fools of the wisest of them all.

SONG.—*Duchess.*

To woman's wit, to woman's wit,
What is there to compare?
Task land or sea, to yield to thee
This secret of the fair;
'Tis all in vain, you ne'er can hit
The magic charm of woman's wit.

To man denied, with all his pride,
Is woman's wit for ever,
Task earth or air, that essence rare,
Thy power can purchase, never.
Ah! no, no, no, man ne'er can hit
The magic charm of woman's wit.

[*Exit Duchess.*

End of Song, enter PIERRE.

Pierre. His Highness the Duc D'Orleans and Colonel O'Dillon.

Mad. Shew the Duc into my boudoir; say nothing of the Duchess having been here. (*Exit* PIERRE.) Now, *ma chere*, courage, and all goes bravely. [*Exeunt.*

[*At Ladies' exit*, PIERRE *re-enters, shewing in the Duke of* ORLEANS *and Colonel* O'DILLON.

Duke. Shew me to Lady Ascot's apartments.

Servant. I have Sir John's orders to deny all admittance during his absence, your Grace.

O'Dill. Mighty civil that, of Sir John.

Duke. Surely, friend, you must have mistaken. Say to Lady Ascot that the Duc d'Orleans wishes to pay his devoirs to her, and Madame de Meneville.

Pierre. Lady Ascot is in Madame's boudoir; if your Grace will allow me, I'll shew you there.

Orl. Ah! this is more fortunate than my best genius dared to promise me. Kind creature, to make amends for her husband's cruelty, in shutting me out of her *own* chamber, she graciously meets me in her *friend's* where there can be little fear from interruption. [*Going.*

O'Dill. But what's to become of me, meantime? I wish your Grace would find somebody on the establishment for me to fall in love with, or I'll be in the way; and a party of three is an odd number, and against all rule in love affairs.

Orl. My dear Colonel, I've a little duty for you here, that will employ your leisure, and serve your friend.

O'Dill. Your Grace honours me—you know I'm yours, heart and soul.

Orl. I told you there was an inquisitive husband in the way here; now though the lady gives me the meeting in her friend's apartments, should he come

in I would not swear but he'd be impertinent enough to break in upon our sanctuary in search of his *cara sposa*, an intrusion your kindness may prevent by waiting here; and should he appear, diverting his approach until I receive timely notice.

O'Dill. There is only one trifling objection to my mounting this guard to stop the husband.

Orl. And that is——

O'Dill. That I don't know him from his wife.

Orl. I'll simplify your duty, by requesting you will not suffer any stranger to approach, until by talking loud, or by some stir and bustle here, you attract my hearing. You understand?—

O'Dill. Ha, ha! A B C, a vidette's duty. Fire a shot on the enemy's approach, and retreat full drive on the picquett. I'll be alert, never fear, your Grace.

Orl. I trust to your vigilance, and now for my little English divinity. [*Exit Duke.*

O'Dill. Um! mighty pleasant, on my conscience —I'd like a divinity of my own, English, Irish, or French, or even Dutch—the devil a pin to choose—what will I do to entertain myself?—fall asleep? No, I won't see who passes if I do that. I'm clapt here as a corps of observation, and, by St. Patrick, I've no liking to the post, for in a love affair an Irishman's never happy unless he's in the thick of the action. Who the devil is this Sir John Ascot? I never knew one of the family. I hear he's attach'd to the Ambassador—the Duke's attach'd to his lady, and I am attach'd to the Duke; and there's all I know or care. *(goes to window)* Eh! there's the maid, I fancy, below. Now if I could see any one I knew, I'd get relieved from this post, and make a little love on my own account.—What a figure! and such eyes! Oh, you creature! Egad here's de Meneville, he's a good natured fellow, and too old a soldier to spoil sport. I'll get him to do sentinel for me, while I whisper three words of Irish to that little grasshopper; besides he knows this husband, and is fitter for the duty than I am.

Enter DE MENEVILLE.

Marq. I've lodged my jealous friend at the Ambassador's, and now for his shy lady. Ah! Col. Dillon, your very servant.

O'Dill. Marquis, your slave. Will I get you to do me a favour of five minutes?

Marq. Command me, Colonel, for as many hours.

O'Dill. Well then, wait here, and if Sir John Ascot comes in, and wants to go *that* way, do you contrive to amuse him till I come back—that's all.

[*Going.*

Marq. Amuse him?—for what purpose?

O'Dill. Why, listen; the duke is now *tête-à-tête* in your lady's *boudoir* with his pretty wife.

Marq. Aye! excuse me, Colonel O'Dillon, I have business of the last importance, requiring my instant presence; any other time I shall——

O'Dill. Zounds, man, but now's the time! you'll not stay?—well, *mum*, don't interrupt his Grace, that's all.

Marq. Not for worlds—but my wife shall. This is fortunate, *(aside)* Colonel, your servant.

[*Exit Marquis after Duke.*

O'Dill. Here's a curmudgeon, proposes to be mine for five hours, and then hops off with a shrug and a grin, like a superannuated dancing-master, what will I do?—She'll be gone—no, there she is. Oh! you darling.

Kisses his hand from the window. *Sir* JOHN ASCOT *enters, not seeing him.*

Sir John. My wife, I fancy, is in her own apartment—the Marquis is absent—if I could but encounter Madame de Meneville alone.

[*Going off after Marquis, O'Dillon stops him.*

O'Dill. Eh! what? no—can it be sure?—Selby, my Cockney Counsellor, how are you?

Sir John. (aside) Selby! oh, he is ignorant of my change of name and condition.

O'Dill My daar fellow, though I've not seen you these seven years, I've a recollection of your good nature; will you do me a favour, Selby?

Sir John. If without much inconvenience I——

O'Dill. No inconvenience in life;—truth is, there's an old curmudgeon attached so the English embassy, Sir John Ascot, who has the sweetest rogue of a little devil of a wife—but, may be, you know them?

Sir John. His person I know; his character not so well, except by report.

O'Dill. On my honour there'll be a louder report by and-by, when the Duke goes off with his wife—which he will do, or it won't be his fault—but, mum, between you and I, his Grace is at this moment making hard love to her ladyship, tooth and nail, and I'm put here to keep the husband from interrupting them, you see—he! he!

Sir John. Ha! ha! ha! Excellent expedient!

O'Dill. I know you'd be amused; now all I ask is, that you'd take my place for ten minutes, while I run down stairs to whisper a word of Christian comfort to a little stranger below; who, by her looks, seems in need of consolation, May I trust you now, Selby?

Sir John. Implicitly. Go! go!

O'Dil. I'm gone. All you've to do is to keep the fellow in chat till I come back. Mind, now, I'd do as great a kindness for you, any time. By the way, did I hear of your being left a great fortune and a title?

Sir John. No, no—I boast no title, Go, go, and haste back, for I'm in a hurry.

O'Dill. Well, if it was not you, it was somebody else. I'll not keep you. Have an eye on Sir John, and hum him, my boy. [*Exit O'Dillon.*

Sir John. Zounds, I shall go mad! what's to be done? O'Dillon not being aware of my change of name, has put me in possession of a secret, which, if permitted to proceed *pro forma*, would have end-

ed in bestowing on me an additional title. Oh! I'll be revenged. How did he gain my apartments?—no matter, I'll stop their love-making.

[*Exit in the direction opposite to that taken by the Marquis and Duc d'Orleans.*

SCENE III.—*Boudoir—Duke discovered kneeling to lady* ASCOT.

Lady. Nay, rise, my Lord—pray, rise; if you but saw how ill this lowliness becomes your Grace——

Duke. I ever thought man's chiefest grace was lowliness; but if you really mislike me thus, be kind and raise me; for one smile of yours will lend me Love's own wings, and send me bounding to——

Lady. To home! my Lord.

Duke. (*rises*) Aye, truly, home! my long sought place of rest—that fair bosom.

Lady. No higher?

Duke. Um!—May be a foot or so, to make a second home upon those lips—those ruby lips.

Lady. You'd make it seamen's home, I fear, my Lord; lands wildly sought, and then as lightly left.

Duke. And if 'twere so, I'd merit seaman's fortune, and ought to suffer shipwreck for my folly. What! leave such a haven to tempt again the sea, the uncertain sea, whose richest island holds no gem so lovely! faith, Lady, you do me wrong to doubt my truth; my constancy shall prove——

"*Lady.* Nay, nay, hold, my Lord Duke—I'll have your character for constancy, on better warranty than your own words.

"*Duke.* On better warranty, impossible! for who can read my my heart's truth like myself,—I feel it throb alone, alone for you.

"*Lady.* For all this I doubt whether your Lady Duchess were not better authority for your constancy, than even that throbbing heart of yours.

"*Duke.* Oh, do not mention her. I need not tell

you, Lady, that all marriages are not made in heaven; or if they be, the gods deal but scurvily with us great ones. But come, come, you know the hand may be given where the heart can never follow; be kind then, and compassionate me as a fellow sufferer; let's mend our hard fortunes, by sympathising with one another."

Lady. If but half what you protest, be true, I should be cruel indeed to withhold all hope—I'll think on what you've said, till we meet again—adieu. [*Going.*

Duke. Angel, a thousand thanks for the kind word, that we shall meet again; but when,—and where, and how?—

Lady. Nay, I must think upon that, aye, and upon the danger I incur, whieh ought to bid me hold here; but this much I will promise, during the day, to send my page to you, and if your better genius whisper me kind thoughts—*Arnold* shall be their bearer. Are you then content with this?

Duke. Just so far content as the wretch dying with fever is, when promised a remedy by fasting and his physician. But even for this, upon my knee I thank you, Lady, and touching with my lip this snowy shrine, here vow——

[*He kneels, and is about to kiss her haud, when Madame* DE MENEVILLE *enters, followed by* MARQUIS.

Mad. My Lord Duke, your Grace's servant.

Duke. That traitor, Dillon, (*aside*)—Ah Madame de Meneville, excuse me, while I—de Meneville, you can do it—this plaguy knee point, here, pray tie it for me.

[*Duke rises, having drawn loose the ribbon of his trunk hose—Marquis ties it.*

" *Duke.* Calling upon de Meneville on an affair of state, I thought Madame la Marquise here, and so made in, to pay my accustomed *devoir*, when your fair friend detained me.—

"*Marq.* Ha, ha! detained by her, my Lord,—I fancy you ought to reserve the position, and say you detained her."

Mad. (*aside*) Go that way down, your husband's on the stairs. [*Exit Lady Ascot quickly, at back.*

Marq. Your grace has frightened away our fair guest. You see she fled like a lapwing. (*aside*)

Duke. No wonder, when she saw the hawk so near. Oh, you ancient sinner! (*aside*) "But how is ma chere et belle? (*to Madame*)

"*Mad.* Disconsolate at your perfidy, my Lord. After all the vows you swore—after almost tempting me to believe in them. Oh, cruel Duke!

"*Duke.* For mercy, spare me your raillery. You know too well I never durst aspire even to hope; and besides, if I had, the recollection of my friendshid for the Marquis would have plunged me into utter despair."

Enter Sir JOHN, *abruptly.*

Sir John. She is not in her room, so—(*stops and looks round*) Madame de Meneville!—the Duke!—Your pardon for this intrusion, but I thought—I—I—

Mad. You thought Lady Ascot was with me. She did favour us for a moment, but left this some time back.

Sir John. O'Dillon lied then; or did he know me, and mean this as a jest? (*aside*) Your Grace's servant.

Duke. Apropos, Sir John. Of what crime have I been guilty, that you should so cruelly have me denied admittance to-day? Was you fearful the golden fruit might be stolen during the dragon's absence, Sir John?

Sir John. Lady Ascot was unwell, and the order was general; but was never meant to extend to your Grace.

Duke. I thought as much. Oh, I shall better understand your next *general order*, and proceed on

my privilege of exception. I thought, Sir John, you were too much a man of the world, to wear your frosty, English rigidity unthawed beneath the sunny and clear skies of France. These lying, cold denials are well enough in your own island, where a husband never opens the door without the risk of a lover's rolling in, shrouded in his native fog; in which he lies, hidden from prying eyes, as securely as Jupiter in his cloud.—*Mais adieu, Madame!* I kiss your hand. We shall see you, with your fair friend, at the ball to-night—Remember you sup at the *Palais Royale*, Sir John. Nay, look not so gloomy, man; a Frenchman knows how to pay homage to the beauty of the wife, without having any design against the honour of the husband.

Sir John. I doubt it not, your Grace, for we English carry a sharp argument here, and never fail to use it in our honour's defence against any man whatever. (*bows to Duke.*)

Duke. Faith, Sir John, you possess a sharper weapon in your Court of Law at Westminster, where you not only find a cure for your hurt honour, but fairly get rid of your damaged goods, and are set forth a free man again, with antlers so handsomely gilded, that they are borne ever after as an ornament, not a disgrace. In my mind, the safer, aye, and the wiser mode of proceeding! [*Exit.*

Marq, (*aside*) I prevented the intended *tête-à-tête*, Sir John, and shall have an eye upon his Grace.

Sir John. (*aside*) My best friend, I rest upon your care. [*Exit de Meneville, after Duke.* Lovely Madame de Meneville, let me haste to improve the present opportunity, to press my oft repeated suit, and again to swear at your feet that there is no sacrifice——

Mad. Ah! Sir John, hold; I have heard and seen enough just now to convince me, your love for me is all dissembled—your wife alone fills your every thoughts, and jealousy of her prompts your every action.

Sir John. No, Madam, you mistake, I am jealous only of my *honour;* "her, I no longer love—I hate her; she has grown colder than ice to me, her brow is constantly darken'd by frowns; her lips never opened but to give vent to reproaches." Can I, dear Madame, can I love *her*, with such a contrast before me, ever exposed to those sunny glances?—can you wonder that I melt beneath their influence?

Mad. Very gallantly turn'd, and indeed it must be a sunny glance to produce a thaw in December.

Sir John. Hem! in Autumn, Madame de Meneville; but not December, in *Autumn;* and what period yields more generous produce? come, now, to be kind, and say I shall be blest!

"*Mad.* But consider my husband, your friend, the Marquis!

"*Sir John.* He? do not think of him—he is unworthy of you, he knows not how to estimate the treasure love has bestowed upon him; why he confessed to me this very day, that he never knew what jealousy was!

"*Mad.* You know, Sir John, that jealousy is not always a proof of love.

"*Sir John.* Hem!—no, no, not always!—that is, there may exist jealousy without love, but, depend on it, without jealousy there can be no love."

Mad. Well, really, you are so importunate and so persuasive, that I confess, I feel a—a—a—gratitude for your attentions; and if—if you are in earnest, follow me from the Duke's assembly this night, at twelve o'clock, and I may listen further to your arguments, where there will be less to fear from interruption.—Go now, and be grateful.

Sir John. Grateful! divine creature!—I—I am transported!—let me, before I quit you, seal my happiness upon those pouting lips.

Mad. O lud—no, no; we'll reserve that final ceremony until the treaty be concluded; for these preliminaries a simple *mem.* will suffice—there—there's my hand.

Sir John. Upon my knees I receive the dear, darling, delicious pledge, and swear——

Enter O'DILLON *at top, hastily.*

O'Dill. Your Grace, the servants tell me the ould lad has been home this half-hour.

[*Sees Sir John.—Madame screams and runs off.—Sir John rises confused.*

Whew! Soho!—Master Selby, Soho!—why the devil didn't you tell me you'd an affair of your own in the house; and I'd never have asked you to do vidette for me; but, zounds, man, you deserted your post, and let the enemy into the camp, without even firing a shot by way of alarm; but, on my conscience, I'll be even with you. I'll—— [*going.*

Sir John. Stay, Stay; what do you mean?

O'Dill. What do I mean is it!—then, by my soul, I mean to go and tell de Meneville how I caught you making hard love to his wife; it's a turn I owe you for letting ould Sir John surprise his Grace.

Sir John. You mistake, O'Dillon; it was the Marquis broke in on the Duke, before Sir John came home at all.

O'Dill. O! then I'll be even with the spoil-sport,—Make love to his wife as long as you like, and welcome; and when you're bothered, apply to me, and I'll help you.

Sir John. I thank you: but be silent, for the lady's honour: not that there is any thing *serious!*

O'Dill. Oh no! nothing *serious* of course!—what the devil would have brought you on your knees to the man's wife, if you meant any thing serious—but, however, on one condition I'm secret as a tombstone.

Sir John. On any condition, my dear Colonel, I'm yours.

O'Dill. It's a mere trifle. You know that ould fumbler Sir John's person. Now all I want you to do, is to promise me your assistance, to enable his Grace to make a quiet bit of love to the lady.

Sir John. Hem, why really I—her—he is a friend of mine, and a countryman; and I—I——

O'Dill. Oh! I'll not stand humming and hawing about such a trifle. I'm off to de Meneville.

Sir John. Stay, O'Dillon—confound it, I'm had, *(aside)* stay, I consent to your conditions, there's my hand.

O'Dill. Well, that's fair; you owe me service for deserting your post, and all I ask is your help to decorate the brow of ould Sir John?

Sir John. Ha, ha! a mere trifle; but, may I ask what makes you so anxious to do old Sir John the honour.

O'Dill. I'll tell you. I've three sufficient reasons: the first is, that, next to being engaged in a love affair on my own account, I like to be serving a friend: secondly, there is a little English waiting woman below, I've been trying to convince of the innocence of my intentions; and tho' she's a little punctilious jnst now, I hope she'll hear reason, if her mistress can be brought to set her a good example: thirdly, and lastly, I owe Sir John a grudge, for that same waiting maid tells me he leads his pretty wife the devil's own time of it. Now are you satisfied?

Sir John. Quite, I should be unreasonable if I were not.

O'Dill. I'll tell you more as we walk together by the way. Do you sup at the *Palais* to-day? I can give you an invite to the ball. I'm the Colonel on guard, and have a privilege.

Sir John. Thanks, I am secured for both dinner and ball.

O'Dill. Sir John will be present of course. You'll introduce me, and, by my faith, between us we'll make an example of him.

Sir John. Ha, ha! excellent.

O'Dill. By the way I've made an assignation with the waiting woman below, for twelve o'clock exact —a delicate little morsel, Lady Ascot's woman.

Then his Grace's affair with her mistress, and yours with Madame de Meneville—you sly rogue! Egad it's quite a family party, and by just lending a civil helping hand one to another, we'll all soon be on a mighty good footing with this house—he, he, he!

Sir John. The devil doubt you, (*aside.*) He, he, he!

O'Dill. But what can rakes expect when they marry.

Sir John. Ha, ha! very true.

O'Dill. And marry such tender, tempting young devils too, eh?—he, he!

Sir John. Very true, very true—he, he!

[*Exeunt, Sir John trying to join in the laugh.*

END OF ACT THE FIRST.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Palais Royale.*

Enter ORLEANS *and Col.* O'DILLON.

"*Duke.* If I were not the most gall-less prince in Europe, then O'Dillon wouldst thou be brought to a formal court of love, and rendered henceforward incapable of serving the little monarch, for so vilely letting thy post be forced, and thy prince surprised."

O'Dill. I was guarded entirely against all enemies, your Grace, but who the devil could have suspected treason in an ally? I had no suspicion of de Meneville's being in Sir John's interest.

Duke. Nor is he in Sir John's interest; oh no, good man, he labours for himself; for know, to thy utter discomfiture, most trusty sentinel of mine, that de Meneville is my rival, and absolutely hopes to supplant me, in the favour of *la belle Anglaise?*

O'Dill. The ould mouser, no wonder he was in such a hurry to leave me, and I to trust him, with

the whole affair.' Oh! then it's well; I am not in the habit of making blunders, or this would be certainly set down for one.

Enter FRANCOIS.

Fran. A young gentleman desires to see your Grace—he calls himself the Page Arnold.

Duke. I cannot be disturbed—yet stay—the Page *Arnold?*—ah! should it be. Admit him instantly. (*Exit Francois*) She promised, if my good genius whispered her kind thoughts, her Page should bear them to me;—by my faith, a pretty boy.

Enter Madame DE MENEVILLE, *as Page.*

O'Dill. Fine as a peacock, and I'll warrant as pert as a parrot.

Page. Which is the Duke?—his Grace of Orleans?

O'Dill. I thought so.

Duke. I am the Duke of Orleans, and if your errand be as I suspect, from a most lovely lady, that good, shall serve for your excuse, young jester.

Page. Nay, as excuses be all I'm likely to get, I'd best keep my errand to myself, or bear it to some freer bidder.

O'Dill. O, mischievous as a monkey!—

Page. Who is that other? He stands looking on so wisely there.

O'Dill. S'death malapert, don't you see I'm a man, and a soldier?

Page. Then to the right about, Mr. Soldier.

O'Dill. Why you little butterfly——

Page. No words, march off, without beat of drum, or I shall——(*touches his sword*)

Duke. (*interposing*) Leave us, Dillon—I have my reasons, and must humour this wayward little gentleman. (*aside*)

O'Dill. To dare clap hand to hilt, at me!—oh, if I catch him out of this presence, I'll lay that way-

ward little gentleman's little toasting spit across his little jacket, till there will be mighty little dust left in that, I'll engage. [*Exit.*

Duke. Now, my gay *Poursuivant d'Amour*, what are your tidings?

Page. I was just thinking how to make the most of my intelligence; which pays best for news, you, or my Lady Duchess?

Duke. Sirrah! you presume on our encouragement—if thou art silent much longer, I must have thee well whipp'd, boy!

Page. Nay, an ye try whipping to encourage me, I may perhaps talk louder, and be more communicative than would chance please your Grace. Oh, I'm not to be frighten'd out of my dues; don't imagine you've a raw boy to deal with.

Duke. Ha, ha! by my faith, thy unparalelled impudence amuses me. But art thou not now a most unconscionable herald to cry "a largess," ere thou hast proclaimed thy errand?—come, come, unfold, and trust my generosity to pay.

Page. Um! You don't look like a miser, and are too gay to be needy; so, for once, I'll break rule, and *trust*, though there ought to be no credit in love matters.

Duke. That were like to hurt the trade I fear me, but why no trusting?

Page. Because the chiefest pleasure in love, being in anticipation, the secret once known, is likely to be but cheaply held in the recollection; however, for once, I say, I'll break rule, and trust you!

Duke. Thy news must needs be excellent, or thou never durst have trifled so long.

Page. Excellent as ever page bore, or lover heard, if success be desirable. My sweet Lady, then, charges me to acquaint your Grace, that she will find some means to hold off from this ball to-night; if therefore, you can contrive to fix a sure arrest upon the knight, her husband, and will be yourself

before the Hotel de Meneville, at twelve exactly, I'll be in waiting to lead you to her presence.

Duke. Most joyous hearing; thou art the best of Mercurys—here, keep this purse for me; and this ring bear to my most lovely lady. Tell her, the world shall stop if I fail meeting her at twelve exactly.

Page. (*weighing purse*) Come, my Lord, I see you're to be trusted as far as a *trifle* goes. Stay—this ring "I'm to give to your most lovely lady," which behest shall be most religiously fulfilled, my Lord.

Duke. Do that, my Mercury, and all is well.

Page. Um! Not if you knew all. (*aside*) By the way, my Lord, I must give you another touch of Mercury's office, and transport your Grace into an old woman, for the visit.

Duke. Into an old woman! Rather a mal-transformation for a lover about to visit his mistress.

Page. Nay, 'tis the outside only I extend my office to. You may resume your manhood when you doff cap and petticoat.

Duke. Is disguise necessary?

Page. Essentially. Your person being known to the household, would ruin all. Now, there is an aged nurse of Madame de Meneville's, who visits her and my Lady often. I have provided a change of her garments for your Grace. You must don them; and, as the bell of *Notre Dame* tolls twelve exactly, give a single tap on the back portal, where myself will be in readiness to admit you.

Duke. But where is the dress?

Page. Now held by a porter at your gate. Send some trusty messenger with the word *Arnold*, and he'll deliver it.

Dude. Thou Prince of Pages, count upon my lasting gratitude!

Page. When your Grace is aware of the full extent of your obligation to me, I'll remind you of your promise.

Duke. Bring me but surely to my Lady-love, and I swear to grant thee thy first request.—But where is O'Dillon?—Colonel!—I must get him to smuggle in the dress you speak of.—Ho, Colonel! you may advance.

Enter Colonel O'DILLON.

Page. Yes, Colonel, my anger has subsided, you may advance.

O'Dill. What, you here yet, little essence-bottle? Little trimmer of patches, and spreader of lip salve?

Duke. I must get you to follow our little ally here, and——

Page. Aye, soldier, follow me—I've an errand for thee. Nay, never lower, man—I don't employ without pay. There, there's more than a campaign's wages for thee. (*throws down a purse.*)

O'Dill. Why, you infernal little popinjay!

Page. Oh, anger avails little here, where you are sure his Grace will interfere to prevent my pinking you; but you know I'm to be *found.* I owe you some small blood-letting, for daring to address my little Annette this morning. I saw you, sirrah; and I never suffer any poaching on my premises to go unpunished. For the present, do your master's bidding; at any other time, I'm your man; so adieu, most doughty soldier.—*Au revoir*, your Grace; remember twelve exactly, and rely on your Page Troubadour. (*Sings*)

Who so ready, in bower or in field,
Alike harp or lance still to wield?
Who, in love or in war, so secure,
As the Lady's gay Page Troubadour?

[*Exit Madame de Meneville.*

Duke. Farewell, thou fitting messenger of love, capricious, gay, provoking, yet most delicious of pages—ha, ha, ha! Listen! the fair Lady Ascot has

sent that boy to bid me to her at twelve this night, when all who might interrupt our course of wooing, will be safe housed beneath *this* roof.

O'Dill. I thought it was some lady's pet, the puppy was so pugnacious.

Duke. Two things, O'Dillon, you must do for me: first, take your man to the palace gate, there you'll observe a porter stand; whisper *Arnold the Page*, and he'll deliver up his freight, let your man bear it to *your* apartment, for there I'll equip me for the soft encounter.

O'Dill. And what may this disguise be after all?

Duke. The dress of some old crone—a nurse of Madame de Meneville's, who has the *entree* to the house, and passes at all hours without question.

O'Dill. Convenient old lady. Well, now for the other part of my duty.

Duke. About twelve o'clock, fasten on Sir John, to whom Meneville will introduce you, and fix him here at play, or how you will; but look to him well, as you value my friendship, and would prevent murder; for if he chance untimely to intrude on me, I shall most assuredly cut his throat. [*Exit.*

O'Dill. (eyes the purse) Plague on that musk rat's impertinence—no body sees. I'll lift his gage, and when next we meet, I swear I'll make him eat this purse, and wash it down with the money, to my health, in gratitude for my forbearing to wring his dainty little neck.—Hum! first I'm employed as a sentry, and now appointed guard to a baggage escort over an old woman's yellow ruff and black fardingale. Well, never mind, I'm not the first soldier that has been indebted to an ould petticoat for his promotion. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—DUCHESS *vnd* MADAME, *still as Page, discovered seated—as the Scene draws, they rise.*

Duch. Ha, ha, ha! I cannot but applaud your

scheme, and approve its ingenuity; but to hope it will effect the *cure* of these vile lords of ours, were too flattering.

Page. At all events, your grace will allow they are likely to be made a little ashamed, by being heartily laughed at, which is the least revenge they owe, and better than taking one more serious.

Duch. There I agree with you entirely, and will follow your directions implicitly.

O'DILLON *enters at back—they observe him—Page kneels.*

O'Dill. What, eh! 'tis, 'tis himself.

Page. Yes, on my knees I swear it.—(*aside*) we're seen.

O'Dill. Here's more swearing, *(aside)*

Page. And you may believe me, my sweet Lady.

O'Dill. His sweet Lady. *O sweet's* the word all over. *(aside)*

Page. Therefore, I pray you to accept this humble token—'tis all I have to offer, save this poor person, Lady.

O'Dill. And mighty little of that same!—*(aside)*

Duce. Dear flatterer, I can refuse thee nothing—there's my hand.

Page. And thus I make it mine. (*aside to Duchess*) The Duke desired "I'dd give this to his most lovely Lady."

[*Puts on the ring, and kisses her hand.*

ODill. He's slipping a ring on her finger—oh, murder!

Page. At twelve exactly! then you will come to me.

Duch. Rely upon it. Nothing shall detain me.—But be secret, and discreet.

Page. Oh, never doubt! my love for you shall make me all you wish.

SONG—PAGE.

Yes, Lady, on this lip I swear, [*Kiss.*
By all that's true, by all that's fair,
That will love thee ever;
That I'll deceive thee never!

No rival e'er this heart shall gain;
No jealous wife this hand obtain.
Then, Lady, banish every care;
For on this lip divine I swear, [*Kiss*
That I'll deceive thee never.

[*Exit Page and Duchess.*

O'Dill. Then, upon my honour, this is the true soil for intriguing: they are at it in all corners; all down upon their marrow-bones, and trying who can swear hardest and lie fastest.—The Duchess has a taste of her own, to be sure. Hum—here *I* have been paraded before her eyes morning, noon, and night, for two years, whilst she has been wasting her time on this miniature specimen of masculine gender.—If I acquaint the Duke, there will be murder done; or may be the Lady would swear me out, and I'd be hung for defaming a Duchess.—If I watch her Ladyship at twelve, I miss Sir John; and he finds his way home, stumbles on his Grace, and gets his throat cut, to teach him manners.—What will I do?—Ah, I have it! Selby comes here to supper along with the Ambassador's suite; he's sworn to assist me; I'll put him upon taking care of Sir John, while I'll be at liberty to watch her Ladyship—preserve the Duke's honour—give her a Grace a wholesome warning,—and have the spitting of this young spawn of Old Nick, who dares be seducing men's wives before he has hair enough on his chin to make a shoe-brush for a butterfly. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*A Hall in the Palais. Servants ushers in Guests, who cross just as the* ENGLISH AMBASSADOR *is announced.*

O'DILLON *enters opposite.*

FRANCIS—*the English Ambassador and suite.—They cross—O'Dillon taps Sir John on the shoulder.*

O'Dill. Selby, my dear boy, a word—you promised to serve me, you know.

Sir John. What do you request of me now?

O'Dill. In two words—the Duke has an appointment with Sir John's Lady at twelve to night at de Meneville's hotel, and he has begged me to look after the old unicorn—now business of the last moment will call me away exactly at that hour, will you do this civility for me?

Sir John. Undoubtedly! (*aside*) Here's a discovery!—but does not Lady Ascot accompany Madame de Meneville here?

O'Dill. Ha, ha! so the ould boy thinks, but she intends feigning sickness, and stopping at home for better reasons.

Sir John. But can the Duke venture there, knowing the servants will inform their master?

O'Dill. Oh, she has managed that cleverly, hark'ye—he goes disguised as the ould nurse, who trots in and out the hours at all hours, like a tame fox—the dress was sent by the lady on purpose.—Now farewell, and if you fail me, I'll spoil your sport with Madame de Meneville. [*Going.*

Sir John. But don't you sup with us?

O'Dill. No, I'm for duty—mind now, don't lose sight of Sir John for a moment.

Sir John. I will not, for a second—rely upon me.

O'Dill. 'Twould be a pity, you know, to disappoint the lady, she's such an ingenious little creature; now I am asy—I've prevented the chance of mischief or mistake. [*Exit.*

Sir John. Damn her ingenuity, shall return and—no, that would be useless—besides, I should miss my appointment with the divine Madame de Mene-

ville. Oh, my she devil—I have it—here comes that easy fool, the Marquis—I'll get him to take charge of the Duke and her ingenious Ladyship, and so be at liberty to keep time with his wife ; and to-morrow I'll pack my plague off for England, which, if she again quits, may conscious cuckoldom be my portion.

Enter DE MENEVILLE.

"*Marq.* Oh, Sir John, not yet at table, we are late, *allons*—

"*Sir John.* One moment I am going to put your friendship to the test.

"*Marq.* There can be nothing I will not do to prove my claim to the trifle.

"*Sir John.* I believe you." Oh, Marquis,I am the most unfortunate of husbands.

Marq. (*aside*) Not yet I hope. My dear Sir John, what is the matter?

Sir John. You know how tenderly I loved Lady Ascot.

Marq. I have considered your affection with admiration.

"*Sir John.* You know how indulgent, how constant a husband I have been to her!

"*Marq.* I have observed it with delight."

Sir John. Judge then how I must feel, when I know that she has made an assignation for this night with the Duke d'Orleans.

Marq. (*aside*) The devil she has! How does my dear friend know this?

Sir John. Through a blunder of O'Dillon's, who only knowing me as *Selby*, the name I bore before my uncle's death, has let me into the plot, in order to engage me to watch Sir John—so here I am, bribed to look after my own movements, and bound over to prevent my wife and her gallant from being rudely broken in upon.

Marq. Zounds, you must prevent this.

Sir John. No, my dear Marquis, 'tis *you* must prevent it; I feel that here a hundred eyes are employed watching my every motion, so that to leave the assembly unobserved would be impossible; and by my going home now, my fate would be postponed only, not prevented—but you may save your old friend's honour, and yet prove enough to put Lady Ascot in my power, and make her glad to accord to my wish, and leave this cursed Paris forever. Will you—will you do this?

Marq. My friendship can deny you nothing, how do you desire me to act?

Sir John. Place yourself next me at supper: I'll tell you all, with the very disguise the Duke intends to wear; "you. Marquis, can enter into a husband's feelings, and will act for me as I would for you.

Marq. Rely upon my doing every thing for you I would do for myself.

"*Sir John.* There is my hand, I am yours eternally." Now let's in, and you shall see me face this Duke with a smooth brow. [*Exit.*

Marq. Hum, that's a quality your brow shall not long boast, if love favours me to-night—this is, indeed, a most happy adventure. O jealousy, jealousy, never yet didst thou satisfy man's mind, or keep woman's virtue. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.—*An assemblage of courtly persons discovered, grouped as if for dance, some in masks, others not. Music and Dance by Ballet, as characters.*

After dance, O'DILLON *comes forward, en domino.*

O'Dill. So there's Selby, I see; I don't know Sir John, but I fancy he has the old *beau* in his eye. Here comes her Grace—'tis near the hour; faith, I'll not lose sight of her, I'll engage.

[*Music.—Raises his mask and retires, as Ma-*

dame and Duchess come down, having on dominos. Their masks worn in hand.

Lady. Remember, drive to the *back gate*, as I shall use that entrance to prevent my old *beau* having any idea of the place he is taken to.

Duch. I'll follow you close—I don't see the Duke.

Mad. Oh no, he is by this time busied at his toilet, and, as the costume is new, I fancy he's not *au fait* to the arrangements. Oh, we'll shame these rogues—here comes my Knight—I'll give him the signal; *presto*, begone—make way for my *amoroso*.

[*Duchess raises mask and retires. Sir John advances.*

Sir John. I cannot be mistaken in that shape and air—lovely Madame de Meneville!—

Mad. Ah! Sir John, my heart almost fails me!

Sir John. Do not trust it, remember it trembles with pleasure as often as from fear.

Mad. Allons, then, follow me closely to my chair, and attend that to where I am set down. Let me first enter the house, then do you knock *once*, and you will find a ready admittance.

Sir John. May I not know where you go, then I can follow in some vehicle, for the ways here are so confoundedly bad, and my shoes so thinly fashioned, that——

Mod That you dread cold and rheumatism, and lumbago; and that your heart fails you, eh?—Are you not now a warm lover, Sir John, to dread a puddle, like a petted cat, that shakes its pretty foot, and draws up terrified at the touch of cold water?—ha, ha, ha?—but come or stay; love is blind, you know; and if not content to be led, must lose his way: so adieu, Sir John, ha, ha, ha! [*Exit.*

Sir John. Tormenting little witch, I'll follow you, were it on a barefoot pilgrimage in December. "'Tis light love that's chill'd by a blast; so here goes, curse the puddles and a fig for rheumatics. But what's my own wife doing all this time, con-

found her; but my friend the Marquis is looking after *her* gambols; oh, what comfort is in a friend! —oh, what asses are your relying easy husbands made, and they deserve their fate." [*Exit.*

[*Music—Dance goes on, O'Dillon is seen watching the Duchess, who passes out masked—bustle kept up till scene closes.*

SCENE V.—*Back of the Hotel de Meneville—Lamp over large door, shewing a grim-looking knocker —almost dark stage.*

The MARQUIS *and the* DUKE *enter from opposite sides, similarly disguised as Nurses.*

Marq. I am here before him.

Duke. The clock has not yet struck.

[*They encounter, bow, then curtsey, and cross each other.*

Duke. The real beldame, devil take her. [*Aside.*

Marq. The Duke, by all that's punctual, what's to be done? I'll keep the field.

[*Bell tolls twelve o'clock—both counting.*

Both. Twelve o'clock—exact!

Duke. O! I'll bribe the old lady—she'll comprehend. (*Comes up to Marquis.*) Hem! Hem! (*Slips purse into his hand, and makes signs to door —Marquis appears to understand, and runs to door.*)

Duke. No, no! what does the hag mean? Holloa, mother, come to-morrow; I must go first.

Marq. (*affecting deafness.*) Aye, aye, I'll knock. [*Knocks single tap.*

Duke. Confound her, she's deaf; would she were blind too. I must give her the precedence. (*Door opens—Marquis curtsies to Duke, and goes in.*) O, curse your politeness; but the lady will know how to dispose of madame nurse. So, all's clear; I'll

delay no longer. (*Knocks—doors opens.*) *L'Amour me garde.* [*Enters.*

[*Chair carried on—men knock—lady springs out, pauses on the step, then enters.—As the chairmen exit enter Sir* JOHN, *quite blown, his legs cased in mud, his wig awry, his hat gone, and his whole person quite hors de règle.*

Sir John. Whew! a confounded dance! my hat is gone on a voyage of discovery down the Seine: to keep my cloak, I was forced to drop my cane; and wading from the cursed *pavé*, has cased me in a pair of mud boots—here's a pickle for a knight to appear before his mistress—Ugh!—what an infernal cut-throat looking-place! I've heard of such doings in Paris—gentlemen suddenly disappearing—no explanation given—I, I almost wish I had staid at home; 'tis too late, so here I——eh! what a grim-looking knocker (*knocks.*) There's a tap for a lover—my heart fails me, and this cursed brazen head seems to grin a ghastly welcome (*door opens.*) The cavern yawns, ugh! here goes. [*Exit in house.*

[*Duchess brought on in a chair—men knock at door—she enters.*—O'DILLON *watching—chair borne off as before.*

O'Dill. I've mark'd down the game—now shall I rouse the watch?—no, that will expose all—stay, I should know the door; ha! ha! the very ugly mug of my old acquaintance. That rascally Page, to bring the Duchess to the Hotel de Meneville, and the Duke making love under the same roof. How lucky is my appointment with the little waiting maid—I'll climb in at the window she pointed out to me—get her to shew me to this Master Page—make him hold his noise till I quietly strangle him with my sword knot. "Then away home with the Duchess, and all will be well—it's round here the window is—I'll know it again, for upon the wall underneath,

with the point of my sword, I scratched C, for Cupid."

[*Climbs up, and exit along the top of the wall.*

SCENE LAST.—*An old Stone Hall—having windows on each side—at the back, steps leading up to a folding door in centre—quite dark.*

(MARQUIS *discovered.*)

Marq. What can they mean by poking me into this old hall—I know it by the scent of its musty atmosphere—faugh! it has not been opened since my christening. If I thought I was put in here to be out of the way, I'd raise the neighbourhood. If I remember, this window on the garden wall, *(opens the hasp of the window, and looks out,)* I'm right; but stay, may not the lady have chosen this place as one secure from intrusion?—hark!—hush——

Door opens, DUKE *enters*—ANNETTE *appearing behind.*

Annette. Stay quiet here, and do not breathe, as you look to be happy. [*She shuts the door.*

Marq. (aside.) Who has come in now?—the Lady?

Duke. Happy—hum! (*descending steps.*) This is an odd road to happiness, and tho' I have known many who choose to seek happiness in the *cellar,* I for my part, prefer a snug boudoir. I fancy that hag of a nurse is in the way—I wish I had strangled her at once.

Marq. Thank your Grace; I'll keep out of reach. —I fancy the *two* nurses have proved *one* too many; and the maid is gone for fresh instruction.

Duke. Surely the lady never intends giving me the meeting here. I could as soon make love in an ice-house. Venus herself could not thaw me in this temperature. I am exactly one hundred below zero! —Ugh!—hush!—eh!

[*The door opens, and after a little bustle Sir* JOHN *is thrust in, and the door closes. He slips down the steps, and falls over the Marquis, who does not stir.*

Sir John. Here's a murderous hole.—Ah, what's this? a dead body. Oh! some poor murdered victim; by whom I shall soon be quietly stretched. —Oh, is it come to this?—I shall be advertised by the embassy, with a request that any good Christian, finding the body, will convey it to the nearest bone-house, for recognition and decent interment.—Oh! I'm well served for my falsehood to the Marquis,

Duke. (*aside.*) Who's voice is that?—I know it!

Sir John. To get him to guard my honour whilst I attend an assignation to betray his.

Marq. Oh! oh!

Sir John. (*crawling off.*) Poor corpse! not quite dead. It would be a mercy to stick him and put him out of his misery. [*Marquis, alarmed, gets away.*

Duke. Zounds, 'tis that rogue, Sir John. O'Dillon has let him slip again:—this accounts for my being crammed in here.

Sir John. If I bawl out, they'll only cut my throat the sooner.—If I could find some window——

[*At a side-entrance Lady* ASCOT *and the Duchess appear, conducted by Madame* DE MENEVILLE. *The window at the back also opens, and* O'DILLON *puts in one leg; then pauses, and listens.*

Lady. Hist, hist!—my love, hist!

Duke. Oh, that voice!—my angel, hist!

Lady. Here, here!

Madame gives him the Duchess—he kneels rapturously; while Madame and Lady Ascot pass over to the Marquis. Sir John listens.

Sir. John. I heard one of them, I'd swear!

Lady. Hist!—Marquis!

Marq. It is my love.

Mad. Yes, yes, here. [*Joins Marquis.*
O'Dill. (*advancing.*) I hear whispers.
Sir John. Another of them! O Lord!
[*Retreats from window.*
Lady. Where's Sir John? Come, come.
Sir John. If I do, I'll be d——d. There's *sixty* of the gang.

[*O'Dillon has advanced by degrees, till just between Sir John and his Lady, first feeling their clothes, he exclaims*——

O'Dill. I've got my spark. (*Seizes him.*) Now my little seducer of duchesses——
Sir John. Murder! (*falls on his knees.*) Murder!
O'Dill. Silence! or I'll cut your throat!
Duke. That voice!

[*Music.—Madame de Meneville claps her hands—the folping doors open, discovering* ANNETTE *and several ladies with tapers.*

Scene becomes brilliantly lighted.

TABLEAU.

Mad. Welcome, Ladies, most welcome; we were much in need of lights—tho' I don't perceive any mistakes have been made—ha! ha! ha! Servant, Messieurs—what, are you caught?
O'Dill. Well, sure there's no great harm in catching men with their own wives; and if there were, sure the novelty of the offence ought to excuse it—What, Selby! I beg pardon—I took you for a little rascal of a——hem!
Duke. O'Dillon, what the plague brought you here?
O'Dill. Why I came here, to—that is, on a sort of a—oh! I shall ruin her Grace if I don't lie!——
Duch. And pray, my I ask what brought your Grace here?
O'Dill. That's a puzzler.

"*Sir John.* And so, Sir Marquis, this is the way you keep your promise?

"*Mad.* At all events, you have kept yours, it seems—ha, ha, ha!"

Duke. So, Monsieur le Colonel, I find I'm obliged to you for this pleasant adventure?

O'Dill. Your Grace is more obliged to me to-night than you are aware of. Sure, I left Selby to watch Sir John, and good care he has taken of him too, it seems.

Duke. Who the mischief is Selby, and why did you lose sight of him yourself?

Duch. Why, my Lord, truth to tell, he resigned that post to preserve your honour.

Duke. I do not comprehend. My honour?

Duch. Yes; he overheard me make assignation with a certain Page, you may remember.

Duke. How's this?

O'Dill. Whew!—All's over; she's mad!

Mad. Yes; tit for tat, you know, is fair play. Do you imagine we poor wives are to bear all your falsehoods without retaliation? Oh no, your Grace.

(*Sings.*)

Who, in love or in war, so secure,
As the Lady's gay Page Troubadour?

Duke. Ha! that voice, that eye—Can it be?

O'Dill. The little *poursuivant d'amour*, by all that's brazen!—Beg pardon—by all that's beautiful!

Duke. Fairly tricked, and caught, by Jove!—and I am satisfied.

Sir John. But I am not; and, Marquis, I insist—

O'Dill. Why, now, Selby, can't you be aisy? You don't expect the man will give up his wife?

Duke. What, is that the Selby you have been making a confidant of? Know, blunderer, that is Sir John Ascot himself—ha, ha, ha!

O'Dill. The devil it is, but how should I know he'd changed his name. Sure he never said he had

got married; but he ought in honour to have undeceived me, and shall answer here?

Mad. Come, come, gentlemen, you have no right to complain of each other, still less of your wives: thank your stars you have such guardian angels, and upon bended knees pray our forgiveness.

Duke. As first in rank, I claim precedence there, and swear if pardoned now, to be very careful how I offend again. [*Kneels.*

Marq. My adorable Marchioness knows I can never forget those charms. [*Kneels.*

Sir John. I suppose I must, but I protest Lady Ascot, 'tis your fault, for had——

Mad. Had she not preferred laughing at your vice to imitating it, reflect what might have been your fate, and down for pardon.

O'Dill. Well, thank heaven I've no sins, I'm innocent of any evil intended, or imagined—or——

Marq. What, you forget this young lady, and your scene in the garden this morning.

O'Dill. Say no more; I'm down. (*Kneels to Annette.*) And there, my little waiting maid, put the gold in your pocket, whilst I put this purse in my bonnet, where I will wear it through peace and war, till 'tis challenged by the saucy little Page Troubadour.

Mad. Well, ladies; I read our truants' pardon in your eyes. Some here may think their punishment too light; but I still recommend, that all such offenders be met with ridicule, instead of reproach; and beg to assure my fair friends, wedded and single, that woman's best and surest weapon is *her smile!*

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